



## **BOND CAMPAIGNS**

The Board may conduct an election for the authority to issue bonded indebtedness. The election may be called upon receipt of a petition bearing signatures of eligible electors of the District numbering at least 25 percent of those voting in the last election of school officials. The date for the election will be determined as per Iowa Code.

After the election date has been set, the Superintendent will be responsible for providing information to voters regarding the proposed bond issue. The informational campaign will include, but not be limited to, the amount of the issue, the purpose for which the funds will be used, the impact of the bond issue on the tax rate, and how the bonds will contribute to the educational program for students.

The District campaign may encourage voter participation in the election, but may not endorse a position on the question before the voters. The campaign will be conducted in compliance with the rules of the Iowa Ethics and Campaign Finance Disclosure Board.

Legal Reference: Iowa Code 296

ADOPTED: April 21, 2003; Revised January 2009

REVIEWED: January 12, 2009; February 24, 2014



## BOND CAMPAIGNS

### LEGAL AND ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL BALLOT ISSUES

School districts represent the public and therefore must protect the public interest. For this reason, Iowa law limits the role that school districts can play in presenting ballot issues to the voters. The following guidelines draw a clear line between information and advocacy roles for entities and persons involved with a ballot issue.

#### SCHOOL DISTRICT

School district funds may not be spent for the **promotion** or **defeat** of a ballot issue but may be used to provide **information** to the public on the ballot issue.

Any information provided by the school district on a ballot issue must be totally **neutral**, avoiding any language that would advocate a position. The information must not give the impression that adoption of the ballot issue is a foregone conclusion. The school district may distribute ballot issue information in the schools if it complies with these restrictions.

Schools may encourage voters to go the polls with a "vote" message but information or signs may not use language that states how to vote.

#### SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

School employees may advocate a position on a ballot issue if they do it on their own time when they are not representing the District in an official capacity. District funds and/or resources may not be used to advocate an individual school employee's position. Distribution of any campaign literature supporting their position is limited to outside the building and outside of school time.

#### PRIVATE CITIZENS

Anyone acting as a private citizen may advocate a position but may not distribute campaign literature in the schools. Political organizations may also request the use of school facilities for meetings.

#### SCHOOL BOARD

The School Board may authorize a ballot issue and collectively take a position on it. However, they may only communicate this position through public records that are regularly distributed for Board business. Individual Board members may state his/her opinion on a ballot issue at a public school board meeting.

#### AMES EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

The Ames Education Association may adopt and advocate a position on a ballot issue but must comply with the same campaign finance laws as the school district. AEA may not use District funds and/or resources to advocate a ballot issue. No materials advocating their position on a ballot issue may be distributed in school buildings or on school time.

Questions about the proper use of public funds in ballot issues may be directed to the school attorney or the Iowa Ethics and Campaign Finance Disclosure Board (515) 281-4028. You may also access information on their web site at [www.state.ia.us/ethics](http://www.state.ia.us/ethics).

### Campaign Ethics Scenarios

#### Restrictions:

- **District resources (district budget, equipment, supplies, staff time, services, etc.) may not be used to advocate a position on a referendum.**
- **School staff may not advocate a position on a referendum during time when they are being paid to conduct their official duties.**

## ADMINISTRATIVE RULES



- **Materials advocating a position on a referendum may not be distributed through school mail or displayed directly on school property.**

The following questions and answers help clarify some of the finer points and exceptions to the law. The answers are based on rulings by the Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board. It is always sound advice to be more restrictive than the law if you feel that certain activities could be “perceived” as unethical or unfair.

**May a principal or District administrator promote a position on a referendum?**

**YES, but only if the time necessary to do this does not interfere with any other official duties. This is difficult to determine since administrators are salaried and often perform official duties outside the school day. To avoid questionable practices, it is advisable to provide only unbiased information relevant to the ballot issue when asked to speak to staff, parents or the public.**

**May school staff put campaign signs advocating a position in their yard?**

**YES. Such yard signs are in compliance with ethical guidelines if they are placed on private property.**

**May staff display a campaign sign advocating a position in their car while parked in a school lot?**

**YES. School employees may display bumper stickers and campaign signs on personal vehicles which are parked in school lots. However, vehicles with campaign signs may not be parked in school lots for periods exceeding 24 consecutive hours.**

**May staff wear buttons or clothing during the school day that advocate a position?**

**YES. Since they are displaying information about their position on their person and not physically on school property, this is allowed.**

**May campaign flyers advocating a position be put on the windshields of cars in the school parking lots?**

**YES, as long as the flyers were not created using school funds or distributed by school staff during their paid time on the job. There is also no city law prohibiting the placement of flyers on windshields.**

**May PTA/PTO groups invite a speaker for the purpose of promoting a position to their meetings?**

**YES. This is allowed because it is a public meeting being held in a facility open to the general public. Distribution of campaign literature needs to be confined to the people attending the meeting. They may not leave materials to be distributed to staff, students or visitors to the school. Nor may any campaign materials be posted in school buildings.**

**May campaign literature promoting a position be distributed on school grounds?**

**YES, if literature is distributed outside the building and outside of school time. Remember that school employees are prohibited from distributing such campaign literature during time they are being paid by the district.**

**May campaign literature be used for learning purposes in the classroom?**

**YES, if it is used as a visual aid as part of the curriculum on government, elections and campaigning and so long as literature on all positions is used. **HOWEVER**, teachers and staff would still be prohibited from expressly advocating any position on the issue in the classroom AND none of the campaign literature could be given to students as a handout.**

**May speakers involved with advocating a position be invited to speak in the classroom?**

**YES. Speakers may talk to students about the issues and their position as long as they do not use words to express advocacy such as “vote for.”**